

July 16, 1966

Dear Miss McAlinden:

These are not really so bad. At least in all but no. 10 I had a pretty good idea where the plants were collected and whether or not they were cultivated. Here they are in so far as I can determine them from their condition, often of incompleteness:

1. Is the common creosote bush, Larrea divaricata Cav., the commonest shrub in our California deserts. I have no knowledge that the Indians used this for tea, Ephedra, the Mormon-tea, yes. The Indians are said to have used Larrea for fuel, antiseptic properties, and medicinal uses.
2. seems to be Datura meteloides A. DC., thorn-apple or Jimson-weed. This is full of alkaloids and reputed to be poisonous. It has narcotic properties and was used by the Indians in special tribal rites.
3. is Heliotropium curassavicum L. var. oculatum (Heller) Jtn., a heliotrope, and is common in alkaline soils in the desert areas or elsewhere and in saline soils along the coast.
4. appears to be Eriogonum mohavense Wats., one of the numerous desert species of wild-buckwheat.
5. likewise is an Eriogonum, apparently one of the varieties of E. angulosum Benth. I know of no special uses for these plants.
6. Oenothera laciniata Hill., though belonging to a genus heavily represented in desert areas by native California plants, is an introduced weed occasionally naturalized in waste places. It is native in the southeastern United States.
7. appears to be an immature specimen of the common perennial ragweed, Ambrosia psilostachya DC. This is the genus that causes too much grief to hay-fever sufferers in the eastern U. S. in the late summer.
- 8a. is the fragrant, small native herb Monardella exilis Greene of the mint family, Lamiaceae. This is the family to which so many of the cooking and flavoring herbs belong and the source of many of the savory seeds.
- 8b. in the same package is Stephanomeria exigua Nutt., a small desert annual of the sunflower or aster family, Asteraceae. I know of no particular use for it.
9. is our native Catalina cherry, Prunus lyonii (Eastw.) Sarg., but native only on the Channel Islands. But it does escape from cultivation on the mainland, and this specimen is surely one such escape. The fruits are edible but the pit takes up most of the fruit, the "flesh" thus being rather meagre. The birds do like the drupes. It is, of course, a member of the rose family, Rosaceae.



10. is most incomplete since I don't have any information on the size of the tree, habit, source of specimen other than Santa Clara Co., and whether it is cultivated. I must assume the latter since I know of no native firs in that county. It surely is a fir, Abies, but if cultivated could be from anywhere. It looks to me most like Abies balsamea(L.) Mill., the native balsam fir of the northeast. I really need much more information and material to give a definitive determination here.

Could not find any fiddleneck unless that is what you call the heliotrope, but you did hit the right family, Boraginaceae.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Thorne